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## OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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### **House Bill 2 2005 House Appropriations Committee March 7, 2005 Office of Public Instruction State Superintendent Linda McCulloch's Remarks**

Good Morning. For the record I am Linda McCulloch, State Superintendent of Public Instruction for K-12 education.

I would like to thank the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee of Education for several productive days in January examining Montana's Office of Public Instruction budget. It was my pleasure to highlight key budget proposals which results in a high level of accountability to the taxpayer and contributes to a quality K-12 public education system in Montana.

I will not go over in much detail with you today, but I brought informational packets that provide an overview of our small state agency and our efficient operations. I am also available for questions.

So we are all on the same page - when we talk schools in Montana for the current 2004-2005 school year we are talking about 146,552 students (February count), 12,039 certified staff, 436 school districts, and 855 public schools.

I want to take a moment and highlight some items in this budget:

#### **1. Indian Education for All**

This budget includes the Governor's requested \$1 million annual general fund appropriation and 3.00 FTE for us to comply with the State's constitutional and statutory obligations to Indian Education for All. The Subcommittee added an additional \$310,846 and 1.0 FTE for the OPI to provide \$1.1 million in grants to schools and perform other activities that support Indian Education for All.

It is our belief that to fully implement Indian Education for All -- and ensure that it becomes a permanent part of Montana's education system -- some very critical ground work must begin.

Our plan for these funds is to build a foundation on which all students have access to resource materials and lessons that integrate Indian Education for All into Montana's accreditation standards. In addition, all teachers will have classroom resources and receive on-going professional development.

*"It is the mission of the Office of Public Instruction to improve teaching and learning through communication, collaboration, advocacy, and accountability to those we serve."*

Thank you for the very good discussions during the Indian Education for All Subcommittee. We received good ideas from Representatives Juneau and Jackson and Senator Williams as well as all the participants during the meetings.

I am deeply committed to ensuring that ALL students leave the public education system with an understanding of the rich history and contemporary issues of Montana Indian people. To make a real difference in all our schools with all our students, it will take time to fully implement Indian Education for All. With your support with these much needs resources, I am ready to get started.

## **2. Curriculum Specialists**

Curriculum specialists help classroom teachers help student learning. Up until the mid 1990's OPI had specialists for many curriculum areas that teachers and schools could call upon for technical assistance. It's much more cost effective and efficient to dedicate staff at the state level to provide curriculum and resources for 436 school districts than it is to expect each school district to have their own staff. In the 2001 Session I spoke to the House Appropriations Committee regarding the need to reinstate these specialists. I had just come out of the classroom where our teachers need experts in curricular areas, such as reading, math, science, social studies, arts, primary grades, library media and more. Our small schools will particularly benefit from curriculum specialists, as there is often only one math, science, and so on teacher in the entire school district. Curriculum specialists will assist schools in meeting accreditation requirements, helping with school improvement and ensuring each student's success which is our ultimate goal of a quality public education. Thank you to the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee for putting two specialists into the state budget.

## **3. Student Education Information Data System**

Our goal is to make the best decisions possible for our public school students. To do so, we need to be well-informed about how we can best serve all kids, including our at-risk students. School districts want local student-centered systems that help them better understand each and every student. Local school districts need the state's help to build data systems that help them measure quality education as defined by the Legislature.

The \$2.8 million in funding for OPI to build a Student Education Information Data System will help us to know that the decisions we make are the right ones for kids. Investing in this data system is cost effective because it will be used both by the local school districts and the state and will ensure compatibility with the federal level system as well.

The data system will enable us to assess student progress, to make adjustments to our educational services, and to measure again whether the adjustments lead to increased student achievement. For example, school districts would be able to analyze data to know which students are at greatest risk for dropping out of school and at what grade level, and what programs or curriculum most benefit certain students.

Investing in a state level data system will improve our knowledge and understanding of the outcomes of our education system. A well-designed student system can be used to interact with

other data systems, like at the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and programs in the workforce development arena, including the Department of Labor, Workforce Investment and Adult Basic and Literacy Education, to improve our the long-term success of our Montana students.

#### **4. K-12 Funding**

My basic goal for OPI is to get resources and services to Montana classrooms. Our kids succeed in this rapidly changing environment when they have the resources they need to be successful. Schools are at a crisis point in trying to provide an education system that the public wants and expects of our schools. There are a number of school funding bills making their way through the House and the Senate, so I won't spend time on those today.

#### **Closing**

In closing, this legislature has been charged with defining a quality education. In doing so, you will address a variety of challenges that schools are facing to meet the needs of our students.

Educating our children is the best investment we can make in Montana. The key to successful economic development is a quality education system. We can't expect to build a first class Montana economy with a second class school system.

My staff and I are a resource to you as you tackle a multitude of education issues this session. On behalf of 146,552 students in Montana, I thank you for your time and interest today.